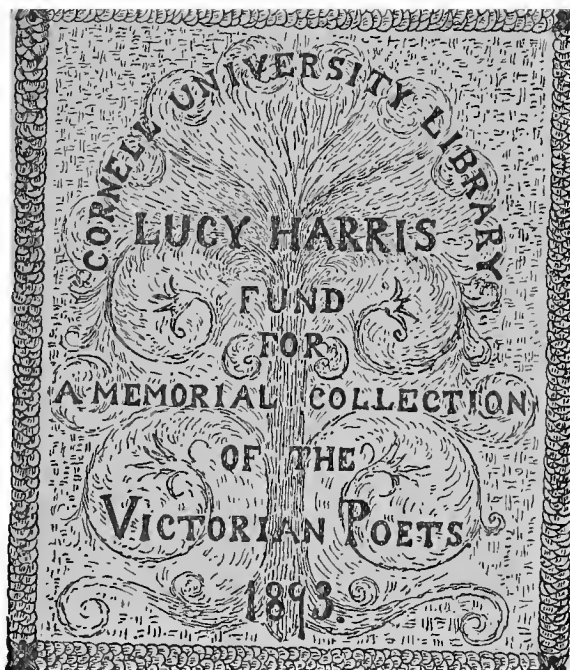


A BOOK
OF
VERSES



MRS. JAS.
GLENNY WILSON

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A BOOK OF VERSES

A BOOK OF VERSES

BY

MRS. JAMES GLENNY WILSON

N. Z.

AUTHOR OF

Wilson, Annie (Adams)

'THEMES AND VARIATIONS,' 'ALICE LANDOR,' 'TWO SUMMERS,'

ETC.

'A book of verses underneath the bough'

LONDON

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1901

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A. 173325

P R E F A C E

SOME of these verses were published about ten years ago under the title of 'Themes and Variations.' I may also mention that 'Of a Lady' and 'After Dinner' first appeared in the *Century Magazine*; 'Les deux Gensdarmes' in *Temple Bar*; 'A Winter Day-break' in the *Spectator* and the *Eclectic*; and others in various Australian and New Zealand Journals, of which I have not been able to keep a record. The remaining dozen or so are, I think, new to print.

It is a pleasure to me to add, if I may, that several of the earlier pieces, 'Fairyland,' 'A Spring Afternoon,' etc., have found their way into more than one Government series of reading books 'for the use of schools' on this side of the world.

A. W.

RANGITIKEI,
NEW ZEALAND.

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PART I.—LATER POEMS.

THE MOUNTAINS.

A CHRISTMAS PIECE.

I.

MIDWAY in a Southern island one white Mountain
stands alone ;

High in heaven his peak uprises, like some glitt'ring
altar-stone.

Climbing, falling, all around, the never-fading forest
sighs ;

Far below him fields of harvest ripen to Pacific skies.

When, with silv'ry footsteps, Morning moves across
the ocean floor,

One majestic coil of shadow purples all that leafy
shore.

From deep valley shades the shepherd gazes on his
starry peak ;

Out at sea the veering coaster watches for that skyey
streak ;

And, in summer, when the star-tides bring our holy
Christmas morn,
Distant sounds of church-bells ringing tell the Mountain Christ is born.

II.

But he listens, half in sadness, dreaming of a silent
land
Where, beneath the shining Pointers, by the wild
Antarctic strand,
One great brother Mount arises, twin-shape to his
snowy spire,
In that white, dead world still bearing flames of some
undying fire.
No fair vineyard clings beneath him, no green forest
whispers round,
Not a roof-tree seeks his shelter, never sail shines
homeward bound ;
But th' eternal ice-field glistens, and the glacier fount
abides,
And through rainbow-misted dancers steadily the
Moon-boat rides.

III.

There he watches, calm and lonely, keeping still his
altar-light,
Like the pillar-cloud by noonday and the pillar-fire by
night.
Sometimes there the wide-winged sea-bird, storm-
belated, wand'ring guest,
Sends a cry far through the silence, quivering to his
icy breast.

'Tis a word from lands where Summer, breaking leafy
barricades,
Glow on fields of honeyed clover, fruited hills, and
latticed glades,
Where the low cloud melts in weeping, or, like harvest
sheaves unbound,
Breaks a golden weight of sunbeams full upon the
quickened ground.

IV.

Then some secret trouble pierces through his ancient
charmed repose ;
Then across his frozen threshold runs th' Aurora's
living rose ;
And he fain would ask the white bird, ' Are there other
lands than these ?
What is that strange moving life that faintly beckons
overseas ?
Something I have heard in dreams, of old I heard the
shadows speak,
Falling star and fiery meteor gliding past my frozen
peak :
Something I have dreamed of men—their puny labours,
passing breath ;
Vain and helpless vapours battling on the plain with
armoured Death,
Till they pass to lands unseen, where Sorrow finds a
long release,
And through all th' immortal seasons endless forests
whisper " Peace !"

v.

‘Once in every silent year there comes a strange
awakening hour.
Listen, living thing ! interpret, if thou wilt, this hidden
power,
When the long midsummer noonday burns above my
frozen hill,
When the Polar ice-blast pauses, and this phantom
world is still,
Save for slipping glacier thunder, and, like stilly flocks
at graze,
Iceberg after iceberg follows through a thousand
leagues of haze !
Then a secret, speechless message feels along the dim
sea-line ;
Then from Northern lands my brother sends a mystic
greeting sign ;
While the earth-fields rock and tremble, and in
tremors, ocean-heard,
Erebus to far-off Egmont answers back the counter-
word.

vi.

‘Then my spirit, leaping upward, scatters wide a fiery
rain ;
But it sinks, for near and clearer steals a strangely
mingled strain—
Sounds of weeping, songs of triumph, voices chanting,
“Death is slain !”
Is he fallen, then, that great one ?’ But the bird, on
poising wing,

Slowly turns, and, steering sunward to the pale horizon
ring,
Leaves the solitary Mountain and the berg-encum-
bered floor,
Fearing not the long path leading to his islet-home
once more,
Till the shining peak behind him slowly sinks, a fading
ghost,
And a deeper silence stills the solemn ice-enchanted
coast,
Where no seedtime comes nor harvest, nor across the
fields forlorn
Sound of happy church-bells ringing tells the world
that Christ is born.

A DIALOGUE.

MARCUS. I hear a footstep on the lonely hills ;
A murmur runs through all the forest leaves ;
The wood-wren sings his five sad syllables
Over and over, like a soul that grieves,
Clear in the stillness. . . . What comes up this way ?
What dancing spirit moves around, above ?
What players on high viols sweetly play
Tones tenderer than lovers' words of love ?
Now near at hand, now far, the music seems to move.

SPRING. I whisper words of sadness and of mirth ;
My rivulet shall tell your thoughts aloud ;
I drive the sunbeam deeper in the earth,
And shake the raindrops from my brimming cloud,
Laughing to hear them quarrel with the leaves,

While walking shadows slant across the plain. . . .
The thunder mutters and the forest heaves ;
But in a moment all is still again,
And through the silence falls the branches' falt'ring
rain.

So sunny still ! One broken Iris-bar
Hangs motionless above the sky's soft line ;
White streamers from the onward-flashing car
Melt into scattered arrows argentine.
I see dark ranges in their forest sheath ;
Far off I see the gleam of lonely snow ;
The very landscape seems to move and breathe ;
The solemn-shadowed mountain fain would flow
Beneath my touch, such secret gladness I bestow.

MARCUS. Sorrow has tracked me as the hound the
hare.

I cannot bid thee welcome, fairest Spring ;
Yet something lifts me in this vital air,
Some far-brought instinct stirs a sudden wing.
No more I see in Love's diviner light
This moving green that brightens hill and plain. . . .
The warping shower that wavers out of sight,
Those floating isles of sun, the falling stain
Of shadow on the hills—all speak to me in vain.

In vain I see ice summits shining clear,
Or sapphire glacier's slowly-moving scroll,
Or peaks that high in heaven look down and hear
Two oceans' deep, unalterable roll.
They from the East and from the Western sky—
Divided by that ancient barrier cold—
Answer each other's call unceasingly ;

No Springtime thrills them, yet thou mayst behold
Some sad sea-flowers beneath their chilly wave unfold.

SPRING. I travel with the rainbow and the rain ;
I strike the sleepy thunder's monochord ;
The vales resound with one vibrating strain
From ewes and lambs on whiter clover sward.
Unseen, I waft above the clattering street
A breath of spice, a rose-enchanted air ;
I listen to the fall of tired feet,
And ere I mount again my star-built stair,
I pause, and leave a haunting dream of summer there.

MARCUS. The sea lies deep where cedar-darkened
 capes

Enclose the long Pacific's misty blue ;
Far out I see the rising breaker-shapes
(As if some ploughman there his furrow drew
In crescents) slowly coiling to the shore.
When first, a child, I stood on the sea-strand
And watched the pale ships cross its porphyry floor,
I half believed that far horizon band
The shore of heaven, the fairer, ever-during land.
Now I am wiser, or, maybe, less wise.
I see no wonderland ; the common day
Brings me no message from mysterious skies,
Nor magic fountain cheers the stone-rough way ;
Yet from dim woods there blows a freer breath
At times ; or, 'twixt the dawning and the night,
I snatch a dream from half-latched doors of Death,
And hear faint music falling from a height—
As now—that falters something deeper than delight.

Then my heart stirs with old, unconscious faith.

So the cold bulb beneath its burial clod
Strikes through the dark, unswervingly, a path
To sunshine and the dew-illuminated sod.
And soon in some green, quiet paradise,
Where falling blossoms strike the passing hour,
Forgets its ancient earth-dark memories,
Turns to the sun and lifts a happy flower
To waft of azure wings and silver-threaded shower.

SPRING. So be it. Live by faith, though faint and
vexed.

Doth not great Nature strive to make a sign
(As to some dull barbarian, sore perplexed),
Bringing thee shapes and shows of the Divine?
Doth she not place within thy foolish hand
Fathomless skies, and sun and moon and star,
And offer mystic gifts from underlands,
And put strange voices in the surf-bound bar,
And bring the covenant dawn from some pure sky
afar?

No more! The dreaming planet onward rolls;
I may not stay to bargain or implore
For these half-doubting, half-bewildered doles
Of human faith; I seek another shore.
. . . There is a river born near a fair peak,
In silence of a secret fern-roofed dell,
That calls me now. The dumb trees move and speak;
The deaf earth hears; the ice-brooks break and swell;
The bird sings out his little hour of joy—farewell!

AFTER DINNER.

FRAMED in our old veranda-chair
 (The sea-side air and sunset braving),
She seems a picture, still and fair,
 Her fan of feathers scarcely waving ;
Dressed all in crimson, from the slip
 Of airy gauze that crowns her tresses,
To satin shoe's embroidered tip
 (Her stockings *always* match her dresses).

So sweet she looks, one half believes
 She must be some Venetian lady
Come back to life (with hanging sleeves)
 From marble palace, grim and shady.
Some people think she is a dunce,
 And some find fault with her complexion ;
You do not see these faults at once,
 But only after long reflection.

And near her bends the man of Law—
 Heavy his brow with mystic learning ;
His fingers trifle with a straw ;
 His eyes are dark, and sad, and burning.
Perhaps he speaks a tender word
 Or fragment of some old love-ballad ;
But this is all *I* overheard :
 ‘ The proper way to make a salad——’

AUTUMN PIECE.

WE found a boat upon the shore,
And stepped on board and plied the oar,
And floated in the slanting light
Across the bay to Mora's height.

The silver-footed wave was still,
The shadow rested on the hill ;
From anchored ships was borne along
The sailor's melancholy song.

Only beyond the barrier-reef
We saw the breaker's foamy sheaf
Springing in air, a cloud of spray
For ever built, then swept away.

At last we reached a broken pier,
And said : ' Oh, let us wander here !'
For touched with Autumn's trembling gold,
The copse-wood beckoned, fold on fold.

And when the lightest air would blow
A murmur ran through all the trees,
And wavering, pausing, drifting slow,
Leaf-harvests floated on the breeze.

The sunshine threaded through the shade
And wove a fairy gold brocade,
And touched the aspen's quivering stair,
And made a luminous network there.

And sometimes, through the leafy rain
That veiled the autumnal avenue,
We saw the silent inland plain
And the long mountain's lonely blue.

There was no moan or bitter tear
At this calm dying of the year ;
Only within his dim retreat
The wood-wren mourning, low and sweet.

Only the never-ceasing sigh
Of leaves that fell or floated by,
And low, mysterious whispers borne
From dusky woods and hills forlorn.

The sunset spread a crimson pall ;
It was a glittering funeral ;
Each tree was garlanded and gay
As travellers to a fairer day.

O Nature ! if *we* thus could die,
In this sweet peace, this deep content,
Should we not meet Death joyfully,
In robes of costliest ornament ?

PANDORE ; OR, LES DEUX GENSDARMES.

(TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF GUSTAVE
NADAUD.)

I.

Down the elm-guarded village street,
Where years go by with silent feet,
Two gallant gensdarmes rode along.
The Sergeant's brow was firm and bold,
The constable of gentler mould.
Then spoke the chief from wisdom's store :
' The day is fine, though summer's gone.'
' Brigadier !' replied Pandore,
' *Brigad'ev, vous avez raison !*

II.

The sun sets in a golden band,
All silent is the nesting bird ;
But through the peaceful twilight land
The chief's sonorous voice is heard :
' You see those rosy clouds,' he cries ;
' They take their colouring from the sun !'
' Brigadier !' the friend replies,
' *Brigad'ev, vous avez raison !*

III.

' A noble life is this we lead,
Guardians of true propriety,
Rewarding good or evil deed,
And frowning on iniquity.

Yet there *are* trials. . . . 'Tis a bore

Our lovely wives must weep alone.'

'Brigadier!' repeats Pandore,

'*Brigad'er, vous avez raison !*'

IV.

'Sometimes I dream of early youth

(For past days *never* come again) ;

Some follies—few and light in truth—

I had. We are like other men ;

Our hearts are open to the skies,

They love to change their garrison.'

'True, true!' the faithful gendarme sighs,

'*Brigad'er, vous avez raison !*'

V.

'Glory is but a fading cloud,

Yet rose and laurel both are dear ;

To Venus and Bellona vowed,

A husband and a brigadier :

I still aspire to glory's prize,

And by the crimson path toil on.'

'Brigadier!' Pandore replies,

'*Brigad'er, vous avez raison !*'

VI.

Then on they march in silent thought ;

Their horses plod th' accustomed way ;

They make their rounds by duty taught,

And peaceful is the Sergeant's sway.

But when Aurora trims the skies,

That droning voice is heard anon,

And still the faithful shade replies :

'*Brigad'er, vous avez raison !*'

A WINTER DAYBREAK.

I.

FROM the dark gorge, where burns the morning star,
I hear the glacier river rattling on
And sweeping o'er his ice-ploughed shingle-bar,
While wood-owls shout in sombre unison,
And fluttering southern dancers glide and go ;
And black swans' airy trumpets wildly, sweetly blow.

II.

The cock crows in the windy winter morn,
Then must I rise and fling the curtain by.
All dark ! But for a strip of fiery sky
Behind the ragged mountains, peaked and torn.
One planet glitters in the icy cold,
Poised like a hawk above the frozen peaks ;
And now again the wild nor'-wester speaks,
And bends the cypress, shuddering, to his fold,
While every timber, every casement creaks.
But still the skylarks sing aloud and bold ;
The wooded hills arise ; the white cascade
Shakes with wild laughter all the silent shadowy
glade.

III.

Now from the shuttered East a silvery bar
Shines through the mist, and shows the mild day-star.
The storm-wrapped peaks start out and fade again,
And rosy vapours skirt the pastoral plain ;

The garden paths with hoary rime are wet ;
And sweetly breathes the winter violet ;
The jonquil half unfolds her ivory cup,
With clouds of gold-eyed daisies waking up.

IV.

Pleasant it is to turn and see the fire
Dance on the hearth, as he would never tire ;
The home-baked loaf, the Indian bean's perfume,
Fill with their homely cheer the panelled room.
Come, crazy storm ! and thou, wild glittering hail,
Rave o'er the roof and wave your icy veil ;
Shout in our ears, and take your madcap way !
I laugh at storms ! for Roderick comes to-day.

PART II.—MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE POET.

SOMEHOW, Horatio, when you speak of him,
I seem to see him—in a pictured house,
Under a vaulted roof, with oak embossed,
Doors opening wide before him, marble steps,
All heads uncovered as he passes by ;
Our stately, courteous, liberal-handed host.
. . . But if in some dim drowsy hour you turn
Back to the home and day wherein he dwelt,
And sitting with a neighbour—next the fire,
A window westward, paned with scaly glass,
A bunch of filberts and a silver cup
Close to your hand—then you might hear of him.
. . . ‘ Shakespeare of Avon? Oh yes, I know him well,
Have known him since he was a babe in arms.
I like him well, though he is somewhat strange,
Not quite—you understand?—an absent soul.
At times he can be shrewder than the best ;
But often as we talk, or on the road,

He pays no heed, sir—no, not to one word—
That I am saying ! 'Tis his weakness, sure.
He falls within that pale moon-world of dreams
Whence come his merry plays and tragedies.
. . . He is the odd plate in a set of delft ;
But yet, despite of all, I like him well.
And many an evening have I laughed and sighed
By turns, when he would read us from his book
The Merry Wives, or that Midsummer Dream,
Or grim Macbeth, or the pale mourning Prince.
They say the play-house up in London town
Is often swarming like a hive of bees
When his play's on. And lords and ladies go
And cry with pleasure at his mummeries.

' I do believe there's something yet in them—
Not like the solid works of former days—
But still a hook to catch an idle hour. . . .
And you have heard of him, have come from far
To see him ? Think he is a genius, too ?
Well, well, who knows ? For genius, mark me, sir,
Is such a cuckoo that we never guess
Into what nest she lays her sea-blue egg.
But yet, for all that, I've a thought I'd know
A genius when I see one. Like enough,
Our neighbour Brownus Alexandrius
Will yet be heard of in the eminent world.
He has a turn for writing—tomes on tomes !
And oft I've heard him say he will be known
As the great poet of Elizabeth.
You should call in and see him on your way.
As for Will Shakespeare, though I wish him well,

A kindly friend, a rare and welcome guest,
I will be bound you'll never hear of *him*
Striking a bargain with my Lady Fame.
I *may* be wrong ; but, sir, the wine's with you.'

THE MUSICIAN.

'STAY, lovely messenger ! one moment stay !
Nor deeper in that starry world retreat !
Stay, for the breaking day is fair and sweet,
And overhead the stars and sunlight meet ;
The flittermouse floats on her homeward way ;
Oh, if thou may'st, one moment here delay !

' Stay, for I fain would know thy gentle name ;
Much would I ask, how much of thee would learn !
Lift to my lips thy crystal-bearing urn,
Or say, at least, thou wilt to earth return,
That I may see thee in the sunrise flame
As once before, and know thee for the same !'

The bright-winged messenger no longer stayed,
Than in the fields the daisies' dial-plate
Flashed to the opening day with silver state ;
But from his bending urn, by heavenly fate,
Some drops fell on the child of earth who prayed.
Then on he moved, and joined the planet band,
Travelling far onward toward the Amaranth land.

OF A LADY.

HER house is nearly in the town,
Yet lilac branches shade her door ;
Her tea is always on the board
At half-past four.

Her fireside has a friendly look :
There's something happy in the air ;
Her cream is such you rarely now
Meet *anywhere*.

I like her eyes, I like her hair,
I like that pretty, simple dress
(Paris, and cost five hundred francs,
No penny less).

Pardon my inconsiderate words ;
I should not write on themes like these.
(Her shoes are neat ; you'd never think
They're No. 3's.)

She likes this shaded corner best,
The rosy lamp, the Dresden set,
A friend or two, perhaps, a waft
Of mignonette.

And someone touches in the gloom
The harp's mysterious, wailing strings,
And thoughts that never spoke in words
Take music's wings.

Dear friend, though tired and far away,
 I still can seek your door in Spain,
 Sit still beside your fire and drink
 That tea again !

L'AMOUR.

(TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH OF BOUFFLERS,
 1775.)

'Look not on Love ; he is a fair deceiver'—
 This is my mother's counsel day by day—
 'He cheats the hopes of every fond believer,
 He smiles and kisses, only to betray.'
 Can this be true ? He seems so sweet a child ;
 I fear by scandal mother is beguiled.

Parents are wise, and I am young and stupid ;
 But *I* have heard Lucas and Josephine
 Speak of some charming friend—sweet, rosy Cupid ;
 They sing his praises with a happy mien.
 Would you believe it ? 'Tis precisely he
 That mother looks on so suspiciously.

How solve the riddle ? For the case is serious ;
 I think that I must seek this God of Love ;
 Colin will help me in the quest mysterious.
 What harm *could* happen to us as we rove ?
 And even if Love should roguish prove and wild,
 We are so tall—and two against a child !

THE BOOK-LOVER'S COMPLAINT.

I MOURN not fading flower nor loved gazelle ;
A bitterer loss is mine, a lonelier plight :
I sigh for those who left me strong and well,
Yet never came again to bless my sight.
Life teaches much. Would I had sooner learned
Never to think lent books would be returned !

Where is my Howells ? where my Henry James ?
Hidden for safety in a curtained gloom ;
George Eliot sleeps, and Cranford's 'Village Dames'
Are shut in shady corners of the room ;
While blue-eyed 'Anne' hides all her pretty looks
Behind two rows of Greek and Latin books.

The 'Mayor of Caster Bridge' reigns silent here,
His cloak a sheepskin roan, and sadly bound ;
My Russia 'Kidnapped' holds a solemn cheer
With stalwart Sermons fending him around ;
And Tennyson—ah ! where shall he lie hid ?
Like pale Ginevra, 'neath this oaken lid.

And when my fairest friends will call and pray :
'I have no book ; please lend me one to-day,
Dear Mr. Vellum ; you are always kind.
I will return it, so you need not mind,'
Cheerful I answer, with deceitful smile
(Dear, dear ! how soon we learn to practise guile !):
'Choose for yourself from all that you can see ;
A lady's taste, you know, is not for me.

What will you have? The "History of the Danes,"
"Life of Queen Anne," or Freeman "On the
Thanes"?

Huxley, or Mill, or Spencer's wisest store?

'Alas! my social work grows more and more;

I never have an hour for solid books.

And if, perhaps, I try to take a glance,

I hear the bell, or "Carriage at the door;

Bazaar at three; two teas at half-past four;

Dinner at eight; a concert and a dance."

This grieves me much, is spoiling all my looks,

But must be done. Well, for to-day, good-bye.'

But ah! what lightning spark is in her eye!

And like a flash she slips the shelves between,

And sweeps away my 'Neighbours on the Green.'

Alas! alack! we cannot outwit fate:

I shall not have a book left at this rate;

My shelves are thin, my hair is turning gray,

They will not care for all that I can say;

And all day long sad memories in me burned

Of lent and lost that never were returned.

Lines written on the Hulk 'VICTORY.'

GRAY sailor, come, show me the place he fell,

Where the hero's life-blood engraved the deck

So long since, yet it pleases the thought to dwell

For a musing space on this time-worn wreck.

From the land of the sun and the Austral wave
I have brought this pale chaplet for Nelson's grave.

I have seen him standing in dim St. Paul's,
With his maimed arm turning the tide of war ;
But the tear did not start in those statued walls
As to-day, when I dream here of Trafalgar—
When the thunder of cannon sings loud in my ears,
And he falls 'mid the smoke and the battle cheers.

And how oft since that noonday has England wept
Over children noble and brave as he !
Some sleep in the North land, by snowdrifts swept,
Where the Pole-star bends o'er the marble sea ;
Some rest to the breakers' tune, wild and rude,
Or silent in far desert solitude.

In the dreary trenches, the hard-won field,
They fell ; or struck down under Eastern skies,
When the pale, starved garrison will not yield,
And the rescue fights onward with sun-scorched eyes ;
Or here, by the altar of savage horde,
Lies one in whose hand was the spirit-sword.

O lay the red ensign above each breast,
And wave salutation to faithful souls !
And weep, too, for those who take soldiers' rest,
Though their record is not on our fading scrolls,
Who in darker campaign met a deadlier foe,
Whose battle was fought against sin and woe.

Now, true-hearted captain, my hour's at an end ;
 Not in vain, I trust, have the moments sped :
 For life is more living, and death is a friend,
 When we think of our brothers, the noble dead.
 There is something larger than life or death,
 Even here, in this world of a passing breath.

There is something written above the skies,
 And the day-star lightens our narrow road,
 And shines through the dark of our destinies,
 A signal from some far divine abode.
 Now blessed be all those who that message obey,
 And meet with their kindred on All Souls' Day.

A MEETING.

' Who is that lady over there,
 With something silvery on her dress,
 And silver, too, her shining hair ?
 She sits within the dim recess,
 And as the dancers climb the stair
 They stop and talk beside her chair.
 For each she smiles a different way,
 Yet all the time her eyes are sad.
 (I wonder what she finds to say !
 An hour of this would drive *me* mad).'
 ' Oh yes, you mean L'Estrange's wife ;
 You must have known him long ago,
 With one foot on the stairs of life ;
 And now in town he tops the row

Of millionaires ; but in her face

There's still the simple village belle,
And sweet though rather faded grace.'

' And is it thus we meet, Estelle !

Now all these years have come and gone.

Ah, well-a-day ! How time runs on !

When last we met your eyes were wet,

And mine were dim with jealous fears :

My angry words had cost your tears ;

And yet you said : " Forgive, forget !"

We parted for a summer's day,

Yet twenty years have slipped away.

Now in the ball-room's noisy stir

I meet the phantom of my dreams.

(Was I a fool to dream of her ?

How sweetly tranquil now she seems.)'

' The hour has come—it was decreed—

. . . You have forgotten me, I fear ?'

' Oh, Neville ! Is it you, indeed !

We heard to-night you would be here.

How glad I am to meet, old friend ;

But, ah ! our youth is at an end.

To-morrow you *must* come and dine ;

My husband longs to meet you so—

You *will* delight in him, I know ;

And see my children—only nine,

The Muses' number—fair and bright !

My eldest girl is here to-night ;

She looks a portrait of the spring. . . .

And you have never married yet ?

How strange ! I see you wear my ring. . . .

When did we meet last ? I forget.

But often we have heard your name,
And something of your pictures' fame.
There is my Rose. Is she not sweet?
My darling, you are catching cold;
That draught is blowing on your seat.
Oh, we must talk of days of old
And happy youth and friends, and all—
Rosamond, you *must* wear a shawl.
Past two o'clock! 'Tis time for flight;
Your father's waiting in the hall.'
. . . 'She has not even said "Good-night!"'

A VISION.

BUT yesterday I saw a ghost—
The calm of noonday was on the hills,
As we rode by the silent, sunny coast,
On threadbare grass, by lessening rills.
Far down in the valley the corn-waves spread,
At the breath of the south wind they bowed and
fled,
Fleeing before him, yet ever stayed,
Gold in the sunshine, gray in shade.
The smoke hung blue on the swampy plain
(Yellow and sere was its reedy breast
Like the stripes of a tiger's brindled vest),
And the bulrushes rustled and sighed again;
But the scent of sea-weed came sweet from the
west,
Where we saw, in her crystal, sun-streaked home,
The blue wave flowering forever in foam.

Was it the spirit of youth I saw
Dancing alone on the lonely hills,
All made of sunshine, a fair outlaw ?
His coat was the colour of daffodils ;
In his hand was a flute, but I could not hear
Either flute or song, though I followed near ;
For so loudly the rivulets chimed that way,
Like bell-ringers ringing a holiday.
Was it a guest from a fairy shore
Shipwrecked, lone, under cloudy skies ?
I know not. He passed and I saw no more ;
But I fain still would follow those harmonies,
Still seek, through the smoke of the autumn hills,
The gleam of that vesture of daffodils !

A BED IN THE HILLS.

SURELY a pleasant place to rest
For this tired soul whose cares are over,
His head upon the mountain-breast,
His cover beaded white with clover.
From the green marsh and reedy pool
I hear the music of the moorland
In lonely cry, and whispering air
That shakes the rushes' tasselled garland.
Sometimes a bee goes droning by
On merchant's errand.

What was thy story ? Didst thou love ?
And was thy love a curse or blessing ?
The reddest cup that Circe pours,
Or sacramental joy possessing ?

Did'st ever build upon the cloud
A house of purple, vain romances ?
Did'st ever know thy faith betrayed,
The bitterest of life's bitter chances,
The first of all the deaths we meet
In chill advances ?

Peace ! peace ! The summer breathes around,
Gold marsh cups bloom in every hollow,
The seeding thistle sheds her down,
And airy spears of hawkweed follow.
The quail starts from her hidden nest,
Where shaking-grass with fern embraces :
The mountains glide across the plain
And vanish into azure spaces.
Blue phantom-land ! May Eden yet
Be somewhere in those unknown places ?
The moorland spreads towards the west
Her purple waves and granite hoary ;
No dream, no hint of death disturbs
Sweet nature's story.

'And he who deeply slumbers here,'
—So speaks a voice, or I am dreaming—
'Through all his sorrows, sin and fears,
Tasted of life and not its seeming.
He loved these plains, these morning hills,
He helped the fallen, sought his brother,
Gave and forgave ; repented oft,
Nor would have changed his life for other.
He laboured not for bread alone,
His thread of faith was never broken,
Sometimes, from far beyond the stars,
He seemed to hear a message spoken.

Oh gently take this clover bloom
And leave him to the fading even,
The rivulet's song, the visiting cloud,
The dew of heaven !

THE NORTH-EAST PASSAGE.

NORDENSKIÖLD, 1878-80.

WELL done, old Norseman ! When the polar star
Beckoned thee to her ice-encircled home,
Thou didst not wait ; but, lifting sail and spar,
Flew with the summer wind across the foam.
The breakers' boom pursues thee—heed it not !
They sweep across thy prow—'tis but in play.
Heed not that in some wave-lamented spot
The bones of many a good ship waste away,
From out the mist there sounds a ghostly call—
Stop all our ears ! 'Tis but the avalanche fall !

. . . And on they steamed, passed the great Northern
Cape,

By all his chiding thunders undismayed,
Where fits of sunshine light his frowning shape ;
And saw grey Norway's cliffs behind them fade.
On—like the Indian hunter tracking game ;
On—past the lonely Nova-Zemblian coast ;
Past wild spray-sheeted capes without a name,
And low Siberian hills, a dreary host.
On, past the never-ending Asian shore,
No turning now ! Their hand is on the door.

But winter, hiding just within the end,
Flung o'er the ship a cobweb light and fine,
Saying, 'Stay, for I fain would talk with thee, my friend!
Sit in my house, and drink mine ancient wine!'
. . . And fast ensnared within that frosty net,
Nine months they wearied of the sleeted sky ;
Till July, with her raiment dripping wet,
Stole the white key, and signed to them to fly.
So out they slipped, and passed the Arctic gates,
First western wayfarers through Behring's Straits.

THE YOUNG RULER.

LUKE XVIII., MARK X., MATT. XVIII.

OFF in the Sabbath sunshine,
As I read in the Holy Word,
I turn to that brief description
Of the Ruler and Our Lord.

The Ruler was true and upright,
His hands unstained by sin,
His form a brave translation
Of the noble soul within.

And One beholding, loved him—
Alas, could such record be ?
With the beam of heaven upon him,
He turned from its mystery.

Though the centuries roll between us,
Yet we stand by his side to-day.
Ours too is the eager question ;
And how sadly we turn away !

His name we know not, nor story ;
Yet dreaming, I see him stand
In the shade of his mountain cedars,
Looking over the summer land.

When the white dawn stirred on the hill-tops ;
In the sleepless and sultry night,
Did he still hear that solemn answer ?
Still gaze on that heavenly light ?

Till the sun and stars and earth-fields
From his vision fled and failed,
And high in divinest radiance
Eternal love unveiled ?

We are all the same ! If the heavens
Were opening about our doors,
We would turn from their hills of harvest
Nor walk on those golden shores.

Like beggars along the wayside
We ask, in our spirit-strife,
From each traveller riding onward,
‘ Good Master, eternal life ! ’

And the King goes by, and the Seer,
The Reader of Nature’s lore,
The Robber of Truths, the Finder,
And they answer as we implore—

‘ We know not its price nor dwelling,
We see neither sign nor shape,
’Tis a dream, a desire, a legend,
The prisoner’s vain escape.

‘ Nothing more ’—yet our hearts deny it,
As they pass by, in silence and pain.
We have waked to that music immortal—
We sleep not in peace again.

SONG OF THE BLIND GUEST.

LONG years ago, when Phaeton sought, but vainly,
To drive the winged horses of the sky,
Great Zeus smote down the hand which thus pro-
fanely
Wrought on our earth-fields drought and misery.

But here a mortal takes a magic token
And on the shining coursers lays his rein,
Patient they stand, those milk-white steeds unbroken,
Or fleetly bear along his burdened train.

The sunbeams from serene Apollo’s stable
Lead us across the iron-ribbed lea.
Speak in their ears ! They thrill the singing cable,
Or pace the unquiet causeway of the sea.

Though now ye enter not my darksome prison,
To visit one who sits so lonely there,
I still can feel, bright spirits, ye have risen,
And touch the out-streaming meshes of your hair.

AT MUSIC.

I.

OH, nightingale, singing alone on the tree,
What story is this that thou tellest to me?
Soothsayer, sing on! For the morning must break,
And from dreams we awake.

A phantom flits yonder, along the green glade,
She glides o'er the moonshine, she slips through the
shade.

I hear her soft laughter, I catch her white train,
But she will not remain.

The pomegranate tree listens and rustles above,
The nightingale warbles her nocturne of love;
'Tis the whisper of sleep, 'tis a balm for the heart,
'Tis a theme of Mozart!

II.

She sang when the fire was low,
And the rain passed on with a humming tread,
Like bees that swarm when the bean-flowers blow,
And the wind-flower droops its head.

She sang of the drifting cloud,
And the tremulous firelight filled the room,
And a blast from the sea-wood cried aloud,
Then died away in the gloom.

She sang of the tropical day
That broods over beautiful island and plain,
Of the breakers that fling out their white wings of
spray,
Then fold and spread them again.

And still while she sang we heard
Far off, over forest and fern-clad steep,
The murmuring ocean, sorrow-stirred,
That even sobs in its sleep.

THE ROSE TO THE BUTTERFLY.

COME hither, fair neighbour, I pray,
For a moment descend at my side,
And talk of the news of the day,
As we float in the sweet summertide.

Here where the cypress-tree grows,
For ever grows darker and grander,
Here where the pomegranate blows,
Heliotrope, rose, oleander,

Does not the midsummer wind
Breathe on us her balmiest sigh,
And from the dark forest unbind
Sweet odours and melody?

My sisters may dance in the light,
In gladness may blossom and fall,
But my lady will choose me to-night
As she dresses her hair for the ball.

To the voice of the sweet violin
We shall glide through the lamp-lighted room,
And when dawning brings new roses in,
My life shall depart in perfume.

DREAMS OF HOME.

I.

OH, if I once could see the brown moorland
Where by my father's side I used to play,
Or hear the thunder of that northern strand,
Whose ceaseless merriment tempted me away!
Are the boys asleep in the quiet house,
Where the pasture creeps to the sandy cove?
So soundly they sleep that no storm can rouse
Their heads from the pillow where white dreams
rove.

'Tis a windy place, and the poplar-trees
And the pines are twisted and bent by the blast,
When it shouts from the wold like the sweep of seas,
And strains at the door that is bolted fast.

'Tis not daylight yet, but the master turns,
And fears lest his harvest, poor wheat, be laid.
Through the casement the red star of autumn burns,
And in pale streamers flutters the ivy braid.

And the mother caresses her baby's head—
'Lie still, little robber, the day is not near.'
Like a nestling affrighted, he curls in his bed,
While the red cock raises his faithful cheer.

II.

When I was a child I used to fear the stars,
Those ancient presences, so white and cold.
But now, to-night, they seem, thro' cloudy bars,
; Pleadingly looking on our dusky fold.

In all their pilgrimage, their starry strife,
 They have seen nothing fairer, more divine,
 Than this low hearth where burns the spark of life,
 This flower-strewed barrow where we fret and pine.

Here, where the trembling note of mother-bird
 And broken words of human love are heard ;
 And all our knowledge comes to this. Some day
 A messenger will touch us from the deep,
 And, softer than a mother's voice, will say,
 ' It is not morning yet. Sleep, gently sleep.'

THE SOUL AND NATURE.

' Whose is this image and superscription ?'

1.

WHEN I consider the heavens, the glorious spheres
 Knit by the ever-circling threads of light,
 Like beads upon the morning gossamers,
 That float and glisten in the web of night—
 From those far lands a whisper seems to rise,
 Like whispers in a forest land of sighs—
 O son of man ! in Nature's boundless sway,
 What is thy feeble, passing spark of day ?—
 A leaf that falls at breath of icy wind ;
 A wave that lifts, and pauses on the shore ;
 A bird that, singing, flies from clouds behind,
 And, silent, falls in deeper clouds before.

11.

Not so ; though dust we are, to dust is given
 Gems from a King, more prized than moon or star ;

He gave the eye, to hold the span of heaven ;
Thoughts to contain the rising worlds afar,
And from our homely planet's school we rise,
To read the shining letters of the skies.
These stars above that tread their ceaseless measure,
The blossom at our feet that sucks the ground,
The stream of life that runs though pain and pleasure,
By one deep law of harmony are bound.

III.

Strange fate is ours ! A spirit must remember ;
We seize the past, we breathe its faded day,
Like travellers in some ancient painted chamber,
We gaze on hours that long have passed away ;
And man, who speaks o'er continent and sea,
Whose words outlive the ages past, outstrip the years
to be,
Who, ere the starry centuries have run,
Marks the swift comet, or the shadowing sun,
Yet knows not whence he comes, or whither goes ;
King for a day—a beggar at its close.

IV.

Just at the turn of night I heard the seas
And woke ; the golden-fronted caravan
Led by Orion's glittering scimitar,
The beckoning cross, the wreathed Pleiades,
The bright procession of an unknown plan
Paced on the hill of heaven star after star.
What bourne seek ye, with solemn steps and slow ?
Whence do ye come ? O whither do ye go ?

v.

Jupiter hung on the moon, near the western lawn,
Piloting in her silver-sailed ship
Low in the sky ; but in the pallid East,
Like some bright spirit that walks before the dawn,
June's planet rose above the wooded slip,
And slowly there the breath of day increased.
 You seemed to hear the whisper of the light
 Rising above the sunken bar of night.

PART III.—IN THE COUNTRY.

A MAORI LEGEND.

A LEGEND, my friend, they relate of these fire-guarded
 mountains,
Three mountains that rise in the silent and untrodden
 forest,
Forbidden to white foot, and held by the Maori thrice-
 sacred.

One mountain, the greatest, arises in snow-sheeted
 splendour,
Far seen on the plains, like a white ship blown hither
 and stranded,
From the ice-fields that gleam to the dance of the
 southern Aurora ;
And one wears the veil of volcano ; and one looks a
 ruin.

In the ages far past came a chief from the isles of the
 west wave

To see these wild peaks ; and with him came the slave,
Ngaru-hoé.

They sought to ascend, but the death-wind blew cold
from the glacier :

And the sleep of its breath overcame Ngaru-hoé, the
faithful.

Then the chief cried in anguish : ‘ Oh, Sisters ! come
hither, I perish !’

. . . The sisters arose in their sun-lighted vales of
Hawaiki,

Snatched fire from the altar, and flew o’er the ripples
of ocean.

They stumbled in haste, and the holy fire fell from
their fingers,

And burns to this day in wild geyser, or smouldering
volcano.

So they rescued the chief ; and the fire to his bosom
returning,

Hand in hand they fled fast down the cliffs of the
rushing Waikato.

By the light of the peak, by the smoke of the red-
burning island,

Over ripple and reef, till they reached the hearth-stone
of Hawaiki.

But no footstep returning awakens the slave, Ngaru-
hoé ;

So peaceful he sleeps in the shade of the thrice-smitten
mountain.

THE FORTY-MILE BUSH.

FAR through the forest's aromatic glade
We rode one afternoon of golden ease.
The long road ran through sunshine and through
shade,
Lulled by the somnolent stories of the trees.

Sometimes a bell-bird fluted far away ;
Sometimes the murmur of the leafy deep,
Rising and falling through the autumnal day,
Sang louder on the hills, then sank to sleep.

Before us stretched the pine-trees' sombre miles,
Soft lay the moss, like furs upon the floor.
Behind, the woodland's green monotonous aisles,
Closed far away by sunset's amber door.

League after league the same. The sky grew red,
And through the trees appeared a snowy gleam
Of lonely peak and spectral mountain-head,
And gulfs that nurse the glacier and the stream.

Deep in the glen, the merry waters racing
Sent forth their turbulent voices to the night.
The stars above began their solemn pacing,
And home-like shone the distant village light.

Mysterious forest ! In this humming city
I seem to hear thy music-breathing tree,
Thy branches wave and beckon me in pity,
To seek again thy hospitality !

A SKETCH.

A LITTLE house, o'erhung with flowers,
Where first the creamy primrose breaks,
Where roses tell the summer hours
With bursting buds and falling flakes.

A little garden, blossom-starred,
With jewelled fruit and honeyed bell,
With holly for its prickly guard,
And bee for humming sentinel.

A little stream that turns aside,
And hurries onward to the main,
Who drinks of it, though worlds divide,
Will surely come and drink again.

MIGNON'S SONG.

NEW WORLD.

KNOW'ST thou an island on the misty ocean
(Green, green with fern, and many an ancient tree),
Whose waving tops, with soft perpetual motion
Repeat the same primeval melody ?

The rata with the red pine interlaces,
And lights the forest with a scarlet gleam.
The sunshine on the hills the shadow chases ;
The fern-tree bends in silence o'er the stream.

I see the harvest slopes ; the village under ;
The rivulet lifts its music on the air.
Hearing far off the turbulent ocean-thunder,
It leaps in laughter down its rocky stair.

There is the snow-king's palace and dominion,
Unchanged in summer's glow and winter rain ;
With frozen wings outspread, and icy pinion,
He floats above the level pastoral plain.

Motionless, voiceless, pallid, yet immortal !
While far below the cloudy seasons roll ;
Meeting the day, and night's slow-closing portal,
He reads the ever-changing starry scroll.

Oh there, beloved ! There if we might wander,
Leaving this world of noisy hopes and fears,
Drink of the fount of youth that rises yonder,
And all forget our shadow-laden years !

A SPRING AFTERNOON IN NEW ZEALAND.

WE rode in the shadowy place of pines,
The wind went whispering here and there
Like whispers in a house of prayer.
The sunshine stole in narrow lines,
And sweet was the resinous atmosphere,
The shrill cicada, far and near,
Piped on his high exultant third.
Summer ! Summer ! he seems to say—
Summer ! He knows no other word,
But trills on it the live-long day ;

The little hawker of the green,
Who calls his wares through all the solemn forest
scene.

A shadowy land of deep repose !
Here when the loud nor'-wester blows,
How sweet, to soothe a trivial care,
The pine-trees' ever-murmured prayer !
To shake the scented powder down

From stooping boughs that bar the way,
And see the vistas, golden brown,

Touch the blue heaven far away.
But on and upward still we ride

Whither the furze, an outlaw bold,
Scatters along the bare hillside,

Handfuls of free, uncounted gold,
And breaths of nutty, wild perfume,
Salute us from the flowering broom.

I love this narrow, sandy road,

That idly gads o'er hill and vale,
Twisting where once a rivulet flowed,

With as many turns as a gossip's tale.

I love this shaky, creaking bridge,

And the willow leaning from the ridge,

Shaped like some green fountain playing,

And the twinkling windows of the farm,

Just where the woodland throws an arm

To hear what the merry stream is saying.

Stop the horses for a moment, high upon the breezy
stair,

Looking over plain and upland, and the depth of
summer air,

Watch the cloud and shadow sailing o'er the forest's
sombre breast ;
Misty capes and snow-cliffs glimmer on the ranges to
the west.
Hear the distant thunder rolling ; surely 'tis the making
tide,
Swinging all the blue Pacific on the harbour's iron
side. . . .
Now the day grows gray and chill, but see on yonder
wooded fold,
Between the clouds a ray of sunshine slips, and writes
a word in gold.

A WINTER PIECE.

WHEN on the mountains of Mora the far-driven snow-
storm
Sows over hillside and valley its measureless burden,
White are the peaks as the sunlighted houses of angels,
Casting a shadow for leagues on the deep-drifted
meadows,
By hollows and gulfs of aerial purple divided.
And far at their feet lies the greensward, a smooth
flowing river
Of field and of pasture that sweeps to the capes of the
forest,
And sometimes a sail on the glittering acres of ocean ;
And sometimes a homestead, with stacks brown as
loaves from the oven,
And sometimes the arrow of smoke overshot by the
engine

Fast flying from shadow to shine on the sheep-dotted
valley,
Will tell of the children of men in their sheltering
Lowlands.
But ah! if a wind should arise, and, in indolent
whispers,
Speak of the tropical skies, and the swirl of the ocean ;
Of leaves never falling in lands of unchangeable
summer ;
And palm-trees that sing like the sails of a ship ; and
the perfume
That steals in the dark from the disc of the night-
blowing cereus,
Then something stirs in the snow, something breaks in
the marble,
Something bids it forsake these cold ridges and peaks
everlasting,
And plunging from cliff to crag, 'mid the shriek of the
echoes,
It thunders along the ravine till it sinks in the river.

IN A GARDEN—AUSTRALIA.

I.

THE elm has caught the torch of Spring
And passed it to the lime,
The hedgerow waits, a thorny ring,
Brown as in winter time.
And bare, beside the almond-tree,
My vine-wrought citadel,
Where Summer globes, for you and me,
Her amber muscatel.

Each flask an essence of the sun
Sealed in a secret grot—
And here she reddens, one by one,
The tan-cheeked apricot.

11.

Hark! from yon wattle's golden-fretted shade
Come clear familiar notes of music ringing,
Some old bird-ballad of an English glade,
That Time himself can scarce remember
bringing.
And now in liquid syllables above,
The mocking songster of our wood replies,
Then listens; while the pine-trees softly move,
Breathing a low accompaniment of sighs.
Hid in this leafy cloister let us wait,
And hear what news the travelling winds relate.

111.

Sweet missel-thrush, what loving exile's hand
Hath brought thee over half a sphere of seas
To wake the memories of a greener land
With that brave morning-voice among the
trees?
Slipped from the cage, a truant frank and bold,
Thou seekest a home in leafage never bare,
Our Danæe-tree that blooms in rain of gold,
And feeds with honeyed perfume all the air—
Here mayest thou find a mate, and rest and
build,
Grand master of thy wild and warbling guild.

IV.

But yet I love our pied musician best.

Such tunes, perhaps, were heard when Morning
drew

His bow, and struck on Memnon's stony breast,
Under old Egypt's rain-forsaken blue.

Hear him at dawn ; he tells his thoughts aloud :

Or in our silent evenings, dry and cool,
When rosy footprints of the flying cloud

Still sparkle from the shallow forest-pool.

And where the sunset leaves of light were shed,
One planet hangs its golden seed instead.

FAIRYLAND.

Do you remember that careless band,
Riding o'er meadow and wet sea-sand,
One autumn day, in a mist of sunshine,
Joyously seeking for fairyland ?

The wind in the tree-tops was scarcely heard,
The streamlet repeated its one silver word,
And far away, o'er the depths of woodland,
Floated the bell of the parson-bird.

Pale hoar-frost glittered in shady slips,
Where ferns were dipping their finger-tips,
From mossy branches a faint perfume
Breathed over honeyed clematis lips.

At last we climbed to the ridge on high
Ah, crystal vision ! Dreamland nigh !

Far, far below us, the wide Pacific
Slumbered in azure from sky to sky.

That for twenty years had wasted away.

All was so calm, and pure and fair,
It seemed the hour of worship there,
 Silent, as where the great North Minster
Rises for ever, a visible prayer.

Then we turned from the murmurous forest-land,
And rode over shingle and silver sand,
 For so fair was the earth in the golden autumn,
We sought no farther for Fairyland.

PART IV.—AQUARELLES.

ESTHER'S HOME.

A PLEASANT place, half country and half town.

A nook of England under happier skies,
With whiter peaks to circle field and down,
And darker forests' wilder harmonies.

High overhead, the sky, in azure bloom,
Opens a calyx of unclouded light ;
How green the turf is in this forest-room,
With dust of English daisies powdered white !

The rivulet, twittering under roofs of fern,
Has caught our English tune ; and far above
The skylarks, with a joy we cannot learn,
Repeat the same millennial song of love.

And here's the house ; five fir-trees stand aloof ;
It hides in ivy over head and ears ;
A flock of roses 'lights upon the roof,
And honeysuckle round the chimney peers.

FISHING.

A DOWNY-BREASTED sky, a muffled sun,
A polished sea, blue as the hyacinth spray
When spring winds smooth its buds out, one by one,
And lift the winging swallow on her way.
There's not a crease on all the azure sheet,
No rounding breaker stirs the seaweed hair,
Even the thistle-down's adventurous fleet
Would fear to launch upon the dozing air.
And lulled by tides that scarcely lift her prow,
Our boat sits like a nest on summer bough.

And near me, all in summer-white arrayed,
The delicate fabric of an Indian loom
(Threaded by dusky fingers, in the shade
Of tropic branches' scarlet-shaken bloom),
My lady dreams ; her fingers hardly feel
The line that slackens on the idle reel,
Where waves of quivering network, veined with light,
Are greener than the woods in summer height,
Whose fringe of foam that flutters on the sand
Is white as daisy milk on pasture-land,
Whose song is softer than the tales of sleep,
The immeasurable language of the deep.

A face of sunshine and a brow of shade !
Brown eyes that seem to question and entreat,
Hair, half of gold and half of hazel made,
An accent like the streamlet, wild and sweet.

Are these the tokens of as fair a mind,
The manifest and expression of the soul,
Or are they but a portrait, mutely kind,
Unanswering beauty of the painter's scroll ?
I cannot guess ; but sweet it is to glide,
Dreaming beside her, on this dreaming tide.

But now the very clouds are standing still ;
The sea-gulls scream and balance in the strait,
And flash above the purple-pillared hill
That guards our harbour's narrow rocky gate.
And there the iron-shod ocean messenger,
Over the shadowy meadows of the bay
Slips like a shade ; and from her forehead clear
As hawthorn blossoms in an English May,
Scatters the spinning fountains of the spray.
We must go home ; the wave sings drowsily,
. . . If I should speak, what would her answer be ?

THROUGH THE WOODS.

ESTHER. I am going to church through the woods.
It is Catherine's Eve.

ELIOT. I will walk with you there, and will wait till
your service is done.

I am a doubter, you know. 'Tis the mould of the
age.

I fear we are children of Thomas the doubter to-day.

ESTHER. Yet Thomas was still an Apostle, and one
of the saints,
And blessed are they who have not seen and yet have
believed.

ELIOT. Alas ! we are all too unworthy ! but yet, in
our hearts

Something cleaves, were it only the hymns and the
prayers of the past. . . .

As you see in this oak-tree, fast-locked in the thick-
folded wood,

The nail that a child's hand has driven in when it was
green.

But speak of your childhood to me. Was your home
always here ?

ESTHER. When I was a child I remember we lived
on a hill

In the far-off Australian landscape, not here in the
green.

How high was the sky in those days ! The wide plain
at our feet

Stretched out like the sea, and the long, long horizon
unbound

Seemed to faint in mirage, like the smoke of a surf-
beaten shore.

From my window high up in the roof I could look out
for leagues

O'er the great plains unploughed, white and sear in
the midsummer heats,

Not dipped in green leaves, like your England in
ripening June.

. . . There was only one track ; it went wandering
round and about

Till it climbed on a ridge of the hills, and went over
the spur.

To my fancy it seemed like the road that the pilgrims
of old,

Good Christian and Hopeful, climbed on to the
heavenly land.

How often I looked, half in hope, that the Three
Shining Ones

Would walk there in light ; but they never came over
the hills. . . .

Some days I would see on the road the slow yoke-
laden steers

Dragging patiently on in the dust-cloud their burden
of wool

From the far-inland desert ; and sometimes at dusk
on the pass

Their camp-fires shone friendly, like lighthouses over
the plain.

I never can bear now to look at the cherry in Spring,
When her boughs are down-pressed by the weight of
her bee-haunted snow.

For when the bloom whitens I feel my first sorrow
again—

That first pain, so strange and so keen ; when he left
me alone,

My brother, my playmate, my friend, in the blossom-
ing Spring ;

The Three Shining Ones came in the midnight and
led him away.

But I looked for the watch-fires and dreamed—though
I knew it was vain—

He might send me a word ; or perhaps in that house
on the pass,

Where the ringlet of smoke used to rise on the gray
granite wall,

I might find the Interpreter's house, and would play
with him there. . . .

But here is the church—do not wait—I will walk home
alone.

AT HOME.

HIGH in her little rose-clad room
Niched in the winding stair,
My lady sits and looks abroad
On the wind's thoroughfare.

The roof is tined with cedar-wood,
The panels golden pine,
The lattice set with lozenges,
And hung with crimson fine.

The pear-tree wraps her oriel ;
Musk fills the window frame ;
Her paroquet sits in the ring,
And twitters out her name.

The circling landscape underneath
Glow through its misty veil ;
The thunder-cloud against the wind
Beats up, a blackening sail.

The sea, that shone like silver scales,
Fades, tarnished by its breath ;
The shaking poplar turns her face
As in a wind of death.

Still half the fields return the sun,
Still laughs the running wheat :
The bird sings on—one sheet of flame !
And now the thunders meet.

But up within the turret-room
How still it is, how warm !
Shut, like the water-lily's cup
That closes in the storm.

A kitten coiled upon the chair,
A half-wrought broidery,
Books on the wall, and passing dreams—
Perchance a dream of me !

You hear no knock, no creaking door,
No foot upon the stair,
But Love has stolen the key of thought,
Before you know he's there.

OUT OF DOORS.

ELIOT. Here on the slope of this brown mountain
side,
That turns, like some great beast, towards the west,
His coat those long-haired grasses dry and wan,
His mane a tuft of shaggy, stunted trees—
I will see out the day. Come, Rollo, come !
There should be snipe in these high withered swamps,
And with a gun no man is quite a fool.

Not for the world would I have vexed my friend,
But something in our web has gone awry. . . .
think I know the meaning of this change ;
What brings fair Clytie to our quiet shores ?
A widow now—rich, lovely, free as air—
Has she no men left in her London world
That she must steer her yacht to Heron Bay ?
Poor sport here, truly. What, then, does she seek ?

The same white outline, carved as if in stone ;
Bright waves of hair that mock the statue's mould ;
Eyes, lifting with the sweep of brown bird's wing ;
A dimple—copied from an Angel's head
That, set on high in some Cathedral gloom,
Bends on the changing centuries of men
Its changeless, sweet, expressionless repose—
I know them all by heart ! I ought to know !
Once, years ago, I thought my life was spoilt
Because she left me for a richer prey.
Now I am grateful : for she taught me much.

Yesterday, when the sky was white as milk,
And all the sea-paths set with mother o' pearl,
Pale in the afternoon's midsummer heat,
I rowed her to the heron-haunted cove.
Pleasant it was to feel the doubting air
Whisper, and move, and then alight again ;
And pleasant, too, to hear of other days :
To ask, ' They have not all forgotten me ;
There still remains a kinsman or a friend
Who holds me dearer for my father's sake ?'
While thus we talked, we passed the ruddy cliffs,
And saw the herons in their fishing-pool.
The bare-legged, happy boys upon the beach
Sent shrilly messages along the calm ;
The water changed, like necks of humming birds,
Shooting from green to gold, from blue to gray.
The fisher-sails hung motionless at sea,
And whiter gulls poised silently above.

Here, resting on the oars, I let my thoughts
Slip down the long remembrance of our youth. . . .

As one who sinks in sleep's deep dusky wave,
While shadowy dreams play round him, so was I.

Once more I stood within a garden dim,
With square-cut mazes, alleys trim and green ;
There was no sun ; the sky was softly gray
And underneath the green of centuries
Thrice-folded in the garden's leafy close.
A ridge of moorland showed above the wall ;
The east wind blew (tho' June's door stood ajar),
And swept the tulips into twinkling waves ;
Lifted the lids of hidden spicy stores,
Shook out the pitchers of the honey-vine,
And disarrayed the prim carnation beds.
The old gray house—a wall of braided bloom,
A girl's scarf flitting thro' the linden shade—
This bunch of lilacs, plucked within the hour,
And the same voice and presence there as now.
Was it all a dream, or am I now awake ? . . .
Sometimes she spoke of little trifling things
Long past ; and asked me had I quite forgot.
With half a sigh I answered cheerfully.

It may be that the Baroness finds it dull
At times, perhaps, even in her palmiest days ;
We cannot always summon Joy at will—
He is a rover, wild as any hawk,
And will not live, the song-bird of the breast,
Save where it pleases him to stoop and build.
Bright-wingèd traveller of a fairer sky !
Perhaps she thinks that old-world comedy
That once we played might serve to pass the hour :

We have rehearsed it well ! It should be smooth—
But not the same—once is enough for me.

Now, Esther, let this dark thought pass away
That floats between us, like a grasping cloud ;
Trust me, I seek no other eyes but yours.

Far from the coast, and hidden misty capes,
As night draws on I hear a gathering sound.
It is the ground-swell of the southern deep,
Rebounding from our iron-fronted shores—
High answer to the Antarctic breakers' call.
There has been wild work on the seas last night,
And will be more, to break this leaden calm ;
There stings a raindrop, like a signal shot.
Come, Rollo, we must find a homeward path
Down this high shoulder of the bending hill,
Whose seaward-slanting bush of mounded green,
Shaped by the strong south-easter's keenest scythe,
Will give us shelter from his coming blast.

ESTHER'S SONG.

I KNOW a place where rows of giant pines
By unseen hands were planted long ago,
Their ruddy boles in long unbroken lines
Scenting with sandal-wood the path below.

Sometimes the long light spangles all the glade,
And gilds the turf with tremulous filigrees—
Sunshine entangled in a net of shade—
That moves with every movement of the trees.

Three centuries, in these dim, cloistered lines,
They have stood waiting on the forest floor ;
Their branches hung with rigging of dead vines,
Like ships deserted on a weary shore.

The blinded light, the verdurous atmosphere,
The ever-wandering whisper of the breeze,
Will solace me. My footsteps almost fear
To break this endless Sabbath of the trees.

Give me your counsel, melancholy friends !
Bend, bend your branches over me and hear !
Show me the bourne to which my pathway tends,
And lend me something of your solemn cheer.

You answer not ; but through your endless sigh,
Far off I hear the lonely bell-bird fret.
I know the secret he would fain deny—
Love's hope and inexpressible regret.

WEDNESDAY.

COME, let's be friends—this day of bliss
Was surely meant for happy eyes—
Or sign, at least, an armistice
Till quarrelling winds arise.

On this green headland we will stay
Till day has spent his golden hoard ;
See the cloud-shadows on the Bay
Mark out a chequer-board.

These ships shall be our playing men ;
Mine is the schooner, calm-bestead ;
Yours is the brig that tacks in vain
To clear the Burning Head.

Mine, mine has won ! She fills, she soars,
She sails into the azure day ;
A wild wind shakes the mountain doors,
And sweeps our board away !

PARTING.

ESTHER. I think the time has come that we must
part.

I do not blame you, but I could not bear
To parley with another for your heart,
Or be contented with a smaller share.
No, no—go to her—love her—as you will.
(Alas for me if I must love you still !)

I do not blame you. Doubtless she is fair
(For her age, too !)—your taste is like a man's ;
Her eyes have something of a vacant stare,
But that may suit her well-considered plans ;
I heard men say—‘ Just made for love.’ Ah, well,
Those that are made to love have no such spell.

But not for all her beauty nor her art,
No, not for even the love she takes from you,
Would I exchange my solitary part
For hers, whose skies may seem for ever blue ;
Rather I'd keep my soul (tho' but in pain)
Than own a life so empty, cold, and vain.

Now once again, now once for all farewell !
Never again on earth I'll take your hand ;
How many a spring like this will green the dell ?
But we shall never more in friendship stand ;
But do not grieve for freedom—who can tell ?—
Life is not over yet—farewell—farewell !

CONCLUSION.

ELIOT. Farewell then to a heart that cannot
trust !

Farewell to one who for a moment's blame
Severs me from her love with thoughts unjust ;
Far better so—we could not be the same.

Once (as I thought) I had a gentle friend,
Her eyes were ever full of mirthful speech ;
I dreamed she would be faithful to the end ;
Love's lesson, surely, she was made to teach.

But she is changed, and I must leave the place
Where some few happy hours were given away ;
Now for the last I look upon your face—
Was it the wind, or did you whisper ' Stay ' ?

PART V.—SONGS AND IMITATIONS.

THE LARK'S SONG.

THE morning is wild and dark,
The night-mist runs on the vale,
Bright Lucifer dies to a spark,
And the wind whistles up for a gale.
And stormy the day may be
That breaks through its prison bars,
But it brings no regret to me,
For I sing at the door of the stars !

Along the dim ocean-verge
I see the ships labouring on ;
They rise on the lifting surge
One moment, and they are gone.
I see on the twilight plain
The flash of the flying cars ;
Men travail in joy or pain—
But I sing at the door of the stars !

I see the green, sleeping world,
 The pastures all glazed with rime :
 The smoke from the chimney curled :
 I hear the faint church bells chime.
 I see the gray mountain crest,
 The slopes, and the forest-spars,
 With the dying moon on their breast—
 While I sing at the door of the stars !

HE LOVES ME NOT!

SUGGESTED BY 'DU LIEBST MICH NICHT,'
 BY GRAF PLATEN.

He loves me not ! The hour is past for meeting ;
 The daisy closes round our garden plot !
 The fountain sends to earth its happy greeting,
 But he—he loves me not !

He loves me not ! I've plucked three russet peaches,
 Just ripened for him in our favourite spot.
 But no one moves through all those shining beeches—
 He loves, he loves me not !

He loves me not ! This rose-hued gown I'm wearing
 He used to praise—but now I'm all forgot.
 My peace is gone, my hope's past all repairing,
 Alas ! he loves me not !

He loves me not ! But who comes up the valley ?
 I hear his step—my pigeons leave the cote—
 Go, doubting fiend ! Take to thy dreariest alley
 That lie ! He loves me not !

TO LAURA.

IF you could sit beside me
In your gown of old brocade
(Dim primroses mixed with silver),
And your ruffles stiff and staid,

While the rainy clouds draw downward,
And the shadows fill the room ;
And the fire, our boon companion,
Laughs and dances in the gloom,

While the roof-tree creaks and quivers
With the wild autumnal gale,
And the staggering forest echoes
To the breakers' distant wail ;

Then it sinks, and low, and lower,
Steals a tender music in
(As it seems a phantom master
Playing on the violin).

In the pause we hear the fretting
Of the fallen lattice-vine,
And the poplar speaks in whispers
To the ever-trembling pine.

Then again the forest thunders !
And the seaward voices swell,
And the storm flings wide the portal
For some guest invisible.

When the silver lamp is lighted,
And your mother's picture there
Looks and listens to our voices
With her fond protecting air.

Thus if we could sit together—
Ah, that dream may never be !
Come, wild equinoctial tempest,
I will wander forth with thee !

THE MOTHER.

My heart is o'erflowing,
My foot treads the foam,
Go tell to the wide world
My son has come home
From the far-rolling north sea,
Where mermaidens cry,
Where the sun, all the week long,
Goes round in the sky,
Where the ice-cliffs break seaward
With thunder-loud fall,
From the pale northern dancers—
He comes from you all !

Go, seek in the oak-chest
The blue-flowered plate,
The bowl like an eggshell,
The cup's silver mate.
Lay on the round table
The damask so fine,

And cut the black cluster
Still left on the vine.
My hand shakes—but bring me
That pure honeycomb,
Now nothing shall vex me,
My boy has come home !

Now twine on the doorway
Pale wreaths of jasmine,
And tell all the village
His ship has come in.
How lucky my wheat-bread
Was baked yester night ;
He loves the brown home-loaf,
And this is so light.
Now heap up wild berries
As black as the sloe—
I never must tell him
I've wept for him so !

The girls will come running
To hear all the news,
The neighbours with nodding
And scraping of shoes.
The fiddler, the fifer,
Will play as they run,
The blind beggar, even,
Will welcome my son.
He smiles like his father
(I'll sit there and think),
Oh, could he but see us—
It makes my heart sink.

But what is that?—‘Mother!’
I heard someone call.
‘Oh, Ronald, my first-born,
You’ve come after all!’

FROM HEINE.

I.

With myrtle and roses
Perfumed and cold,
With weeping laburnum
And marigold,
I will garland this book
Like some holy shrine,
And wrap in its shroud
These sad songs of mine.
Oh, if Love, too, could sleep in its funeral
fold!

II.

This sunshiny summer morning
The trees by the south wind are stirred,
The roses are whispering together ;
I only have never a word.
The roses are nodding and whispering,
‘O Love! . Let us love while we may,
Reproach not our sister, our darling,
Though lonely she leaves us to-day.’

IMITATION OF A SWEDISH SONG.

WHEN Winter drives his flock abroad
And fleeces all the vale,
We bar the door, it is so chill—
So chill in Aladale.

When Spring sails in her merchantmen,
Full-loaded to the rail
With flower and leaf, it is so green—
So green in Aladale.

When Summer builds a cloudy tower,
And corn is golden-pale,
We bind the harvest-sheaves with joy—
With joy in Aladale !

When Autumn rains our apples down
And sings a wild sea tale,
Thou with the swallows must depart—
Far, far from Aladale !

HELEN.

I DID not know for whom the Spring-tide flowing,
Tossed silvery blossoms over field and tree ;
I did not guess whither the winds were going
With gifts of wild perfume and melody.

I did not dream for whom the star was shining
On the lone wave and solitary lea ;
But when I saw thee, then my heart divining
This secret, cried—‘ It is for thee ! for thee !’

PART VI.—PENSÉES.

PENSÉES.

I.

Out of the deep the endless coil of truth,
With wear and fret and toil of many hands,
Strains slowly to the surface, while, in turn,
Each generation strives to lift the line
And read the secret of the fathomless sea.
Let us toil on ! Who knows, before we go,
What living thought may flash from those green
depths below ?

II.

Columbus, wandering by the Iberian shore,
Asked of the waves to aid him in his quest,
And if, beyond that tremulous silver floor,
They murmured round some kingdom of the west.

The breakers washed, in answer, to the land
Fragments of spicy wood, strange fruit, and shell,
And once a graven toy for childish hand,
A riddle for the sailor's wish to spell.

And we, who wander by the whispering bent,
In faith, and dream, and broken memory,
Seek for a sign of that far continent
That lies beyond Death's undiscovered sea.

·COMPENSATION.

FRET not that in thy dwelling-place
The street is silent, the field is bare,
Nor canst thou sail to shining lands,
Nor sleep where tropic trees are fair ;
For every night thy darkening window-bars
Are visited by the journeying host of stars.

Scorn not our nature's narrow bound,
An atom blown about in vain—
One thought contains this azure round
And circles o'er the circling plain ;
Each trivial life that to the dust is lent
Is garlanded by the unbounded firmament.

Mourn not our fading transient day ;
For over us a light will shine,
A vision of eternity
That makes one little hour divine.
Through this dim window we look out of doors,
On purple hills and plains and ever happy shores.

A HOPE.

THE day was passing in a stillness deep,
When not the lightest air would lift its wing,
And Winter seemed to turn in his white, dream-
haunted sleep,
Half wakened by the coming steps of Spring.

A pallid sky, unwarmed by sunset's glow,
Fold after fold of rippling cloud outspread,
And from the reddening west the lazy caw of the
crow
Seemed sinking into the stillness overhead.

And an inarticulate whisper far away
Rolled from the woods, and met the whispering
main—
So strange it seems to me on this earth to live to-day,
I cannot think it strange to live again.

KNOWLEDGE.

How anxiously we peer into the dark,
Guessing the landscape, as we run by night.
Our torches cast a wild and flaring spark,
They make a darkness of our very light.

MIRACLES.

HALF of our nature lies beneath the deep ;
And sometimes, as we measure out the fields,
There comes a murmur from the rooted hills.
A tremor shakes our island to its heart,
And strikes us dumb ; and all the flowery land
Looks strange, and pale the autumnal-golden sun.

BY THE BROOK JABBOK.

GENESIS XXXIII. 44.

WOULD I could see indeed that desert road
Where Israel strove with One unseen, unknown,
And so prevailed that, ere the morning shone,
He heard a name, and Heaven itself o'erflowed
Bare hill and barren stone.

All night we wrestle with a shadowy guest,
Silent, like Him who once to Peniel came :
We call him Death, yet dare not ask his name
While the same witness stars sail down the west.
And yet our prayers, our tears, may still prevail,
And when the eternal morning lifts its veil
It may be we shall see him, calm and blessed,
An angel crowned with flame !

THE VOICE FROM ABOVE.

IMPRISONED in this 'darksome house of clay,'
We blindly feel along our prison walls,
Seeking some sign that this swift-passing day
May yet expand to everlasting halls.

Then, if from unseen heights of blue above,
Descends the ringing warble of a bird,
Telling of life and sunshine, happy love—
Oh, with what rapture is that music heard !

It brings no witness to our narrow roof,
No angel smites the iron-guarded portal ;
Itself the sign from heaven, itself the proof,
The hostage and the bond of life immortal

A TEXT.

IN every land, in every age,
Wherever man's brief tenancy
Has left some stone, or graven page,
Or reed-writ history,
Though dark and sad, or growing clear,
This writing gleams upon the wall—
Some dream of faith, some hope of cheer,
Some heavenly call.
We see some river by whose crystal wave
The soul finds peace,
Some high tribunal that decrees the slave
A long release.

Darkly, beyond our straining sight,
One planet wings its starry way.
No sparkle tells us of its wheeling flight,
No signal ray.
Yet o'er the untrodden deep of space
It sends a secret mystic call :
Its brethren hear, and each in measured place
Sway to its thrall.
Above the heaven's glittering poles,
Beyond the star-beam's fathom line,
Unseen, a spirit draws our souls
With power divine.

THE END.

THEMES AND VARIATIONS.

BY

MRS. JAMES GLENNY WILSON ('AUSTRAL'),
RANGITIKEI, NEW ZEALAND.

'After reading this daintily got-up book of poems we are not surprised at the high meed of praise the *Scotsman* has given to the authoress. In a very flattering review this best literary paper in Scotland said that, if there was no Poet Laureate in New Zealand, the honour might fitly be conferred on Mrs. Wilson. It is a book that we would strongly advise our young people who have literary taste, and who wish to become writers of prose or poetry, to read. Poetry, it has been said, is the choicest thoughts clothed in the choicest language. This book, though it contains only eighty-eight pages, has many poems that would not have disgraced Tennyson or Browning. What most surprises one is the variety of Mrs. Wilson's verse. For descriptive pieces she can hardly be excelled; we refer to "A Spring Afternoon in New Zealand," "A Winter Piece," "The Forty-mile Bush," and "In a Garden." . . . Here are psychological analyses; here are poems in the modern spirit. . . . We believe the book will live, and we also believe that it will not only be appreciated in our generation, but that in the after years it will be recognised as one of the first volumes of verse written by one who was born under the Southern Cross, that shows that we have at last in the Southern land a literature of our own.'—SIR ROBERT STOUT.

'From far New Zealand comes a little volume of "Themes and Variations," by Mrs. J. Glenny Wilson, who does not write so well at all times as she does now and then. . . . Mrs. Wilson is sometimes so good that one wonders why she should not always be very good. She varies not only from poem to poem, but from verse to verse, as if the piece came from a genuine but inadequate impulse of feeling, of fancy. For good or for ill one feels no such inequality in the poems, severally or wholly, that make up Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton's new volume of poetry, which she calls "In the Garden of Dreams."—W. D. HOWELLS in *Harper's Magazine*.

'A pretty little white book, Mrs. J. G. Wilson's "Themes and Variations" (Elliot Stock), contains a few poems almost of the first class, such as "A Spring Afternoon in New Zealand," and "Fairy Land." After the late Alfred Domett, C.M.G., she is undoubtedly the best poet New Zealand has produced. Like him, she is not a native, but comes from Victoria.'—*Queen*, February 16.

'Inspiration is decidedly present in the poems recently published by a well-known colonial writer, Mrs. J. Glenny Wilson ("Austral"), of Rangitikei, New Zealand. "Themes and Variations" is a

charming little volume, with much to attract and to be dwelt upon with pleasure. All through there is a gracefulness of style that delights one, and gives special charm to the briefest little sketch.'—*Christchurch Press*.

'Mrs. Glenny Wilson, the author of the neat and clearly-printed volume called "Themes and Variations," is by no means an obscure or untried writer. Her verses, signed with the *nom de plume* of "Austral" (which, by the way, is the common property of various writers), are well known to many readers, who will be interested in seeing the work that she has now put into book form. The title might have been more appropriately made "A Theme with Variations," for there is one central idea in the poems.'—*Australasian*.

'The freshness and unconventionality of Mrs. Wilson's verses (eight) are very noticeable, and New Zealand may boast of a poet with distinctive and pleasing characteristics.'

'New Zealand appears to have another poet in Mrs. James Glenny Wilson. Her book of verse, entitled "Themes and Variations," just issued by Mr. Elliot Stock, certainly contains not a little that is marked by genuine feeling, and New Zealanders may feel justly proud of her as a permanent, if not a blazing, star in the ever-widening firmament of Australasian song.'—*European Mail*, February 20, 1895.

'If Mrs. Wilson wrote much in this style she would take a distinct place, not only among Australasian, but among English poetesses.'—*Daily Chronicle*.

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'In grace and genuineness of thought and expression, none of our New Zealand writers of verse have surpassed "Austral," whose contributions are well known to readers of the *Australasian*, and to a wider circle still by the specimens in Mr. Sladen's various collections of Australasian poetry. In fact, the two or three examples there brought together were copied by reviewers as among the gems of the book. The writer, Mrs. J. Glenny Wilson, of Rangitikei (*née* Adams, of Victoria), has published a little collection under her own name, entitled "Themes and Variations." It is a book that

will be welcomed by every lover of poetry, and that should have an especial charm to those who, like "Typo," are Colonial born, or who have been dwellers in the colony from early childhood. With the exception of Kendall, the sweetest of Australian singers, no writer has so thoroughly caught the spirit of the southern lands.'—*New Zealand Paper*.

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